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China Expels Japanese Reporter

Correspondent Accused of Illegally Obtaining 'Intelligence' Data

By Daniel Southerland
Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, May 8—China today expelled a correspondent for the Japanese news agency Kyodo, the third foreign reporter in a year to be ordered to leave.

Shuitsu Henmi was told to depart within 10 days because he had obtained "national intelligence" information through "illegal means."

Henmi, 42, strongly denied the allegation by China's State Security Ministry and suggested that rising Sino-Japanese tension played a part in his expulsion. In Tokyo, Asahi Kameyama, chief editor of Kyodo, said that Henmi had conducted normal reporting activities and that his reports had been accurate.

In two previous cases over the past 10 months, the State Security Ministry, charged with surveillance and counterespionage, has expelled journalists after accusing them of intelligence-gathering activities.

Last July, ministry officials expelled New York Times correspondent John Burns after accusing him of entering a restricted military zone to gather intelligence.

Six months later, on Jan. 30, State Security officials expelled Lawrence MacDonald, an American reporter for the French news service Agence France-Presse. MacDonald was accused of obtaining secret intelligence information from

a Chinese student who was arrested and presumably imprisoned.

In neither case did officials provide evidence to substantiate the allegations of spying, nor bring formal charges against the reporters.

In late February and early March, Henmi had reported on four confidential documents issued by the Communist Party Central Committee. Henmi and other reporters here presume that his reporting on these documents, or directives, was what most upset Chinese authorities about his work. The Washington Post and Agence France-Presse reported extensively on the same documents.

China's relations with Japan have been strained since Communist Party chief Hu Yaobang was forced to resign in mid-January. Hu had played a key role in promoting Sino-Japanese relations. Since Hu's downfall, older Communist Party officials who appear to be less forgiving of Japan's wartime brutality against China have gained in influence here.

In recent months, the Chinese have complained about an "unacceptable" trade deficit with Japan, an increase in Japanese defense spending and "militarist" influences, and a Japanese high court ruling that a student dormitory in Kyoto belongs to the Nationalist Chinese on Taiwan and not to communist China.

The documents Henmi reported on, distributed to party officials, gave top party leaders' views on student dissent, on the "errors" of Hu Yaobang and on the limits to be placed on a party-initiated drive against western democratic ideas. Henmi said that Chinese officials had pressed him to reveal the Chinese sources for his reports on the documents, but that he had refused.

Another report by Henmi that may have offended authorities, published in August, disclosed the defection to the West of a high-ranking intelligence officer from the State Security Ministry.

Henmi was one of several foreign journalists who have felt they were being followed by security police in recent weeks, apparently to discourage meetings with Chinese.

In his 10-minute meeting today with State Security Ministry officials, Henmi was told that the government had decided not to prosecute him in order to preserve friendly ties with Japan.